

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Frey Slams Lawsuit Over School Funding



Would Not Help Ridgefield, Says Local Legislator

HARTFORD—State Representative John H. Frey, R-Ridgefield, today said a lawsuit touted as a means to establish fair education funding would not benefit the state's small towns. On November 22, the Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Education Funding (CCJEF) filed a lawsuit in Hartford that challenges the state's system of distributing public school funding.

According to information in a CCJEF report, if the lawsuit were successful, the total additional statewide cost would be approximately \$2 billion annually. This would increase the state's Education Cost Sharing (ECS) spending by 225% to \$3.6 billion. However, CCJEF provides no recommendations for funding the additional amount, said Rep. Frey.

In fact, big cities stand to gain significantly from CCJEF's plan: Bridgeport - \$160 million, Hartford - \$100 million, New Haven - \$66 million, while a town like Ridgefield would be adversely affected. In fact, if the lawsuit was successful, Ridgefield's schools would receive an additional \$12.5 million. However, if that ECS increase were funded via increases to the state income tax, Ridgefield's residents would pay an additional \$32.4 million. In contrast, Bridgeport would receive \$160 million and pay \$22 million and Hartford would receive \$100 million and pay \$16 million.

"There is no question this lawsuit is designed to benefit large cities at the expense of smaller towns," said Rep. Frey, who serves as an Assistant Minority Leader. "What is truly outrageous is that the existing, severely flawed ECS formula already does that. The lawsuit offers no solutions to the disparity but instead, increases it and would clearly require raising taxes to do so."

Early this year, Rep. Frey joined House Republican leaders in calling for revisions to the state's education cost sharing formula (ECS) that funnels resources to towns and cities. From 1996 to 2003, the Legislature reduced per pupil spending in suburban towns by 2 percent, while at the same time increased that figure by 18 percent for the large cities. Democrats hold 30 of 32 house seats in those seven "urban core" cities as defined by a University of Connecticut (UConn) demographic model that Republicans based their presentation on. For every income tax dollar the cities send to Hartford they receive back \$4.39 in overall state aid. Conversely, the seven wealthiest towns (Greenwich, Darien,

New Canaan, Westport, Weston, Wilton and Ridgefield) get back just two cents for every income tax dollar sent to Hartford.

“The ECS formula must be reformed and provisions that cap funding to communities are just one of a number of problems that must be addressed. The Legislature is in fact, currently studying the issue,” said Rep. Frey. “A lawsuit is promoted as bringing more education funding to every town and city in Connecticut might sound attractive on the surface but the trade-offs for communities like Ridgefield would be drastic and unacceptable. In the end, this is a problem that the Legislature and Governor need to fix. I am hopeful that the judicial branch of state government will refrain from offering its own input.”